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FOREIGN NEWS ON APPLES

BRITISH MARKET DISAPPOINTING IN JANUARY AND FEBRUARY

British fruit markets have been generally disappointing since the first of the new year, with the usual after-holiday stagnation, bad weather, and much unfavorable publicity on the arsenic spray residue situation contributing to a generally slow demand and very low prices for American apples, according to reports from Edwin Smith, Fruit Specialist of the Department of Agriculture, now in Europe. While snow and several successive days with the temperature below freezing during January affected the market not only for apples, but also for oranges and South African peaches, plums and apricots, the dominant factor in the apple situation during all of the past two months has been the difficulty arising from excessive spray residue on American fruit.

The widespread publicity on this subject has had an effect fully appreciated in the United States only by those who have actually felt it. The demand for boxed apples particularly the red varieties, has suffered to a great extent, and barreled stock has also come in for criticism with the finding of excessive spray residue on Virginia shipments at London and Southampton early in February. Some improvement in the market has occurred in the latter part of February, but the situation is still far from satisfactory and it is not at all unlikely that the influence of the present trouble will be felt to some extent even next season. It should be unnecessary to urge American producers and shippers to take every precaution possible to prevent a recurrence of this difficulty in the marketing of the 1926 crop.

The improvement in the situation in the latter part of February has been, to a considerable extent, a result of the restoration of confidence among retailers by the action of the fruit trade in agreeing to indemnify retailers for costs of prosecutions should they get into difficulty after having washed and brushed their apples in accordance with recommendations made by the retailers' association. The retail trade has been in a very unsettled state all along because of the danger of prosecution for selling fruit carrying excessive spray residue, and the retailer has much influence upon consumption. If a customer makes a direct inquiry about the fruit, and a retailer shows no confidence in what he is selling, then the sale frequently is not made. A generally better attitude on the part of the retailer seemed apparent during the latter half of February from the steadier tendency in demand and firmer prices. The press was also much less active at the end of the month. These symptoms of improvement are, however, by no means any reason for the relaxing of vigilance by American shippers.

Great Variation in Prices.

The January and February auction markets have shown great partiality for some varieties of apples and a decided aversion to others. Virginia York Imperials have sold for as much as 38/0 (\$9.25), while New York Baldwins have been mostly around 20/0 (\$4.85). Of the boxed apples Oregon Newtowns have not often gone below 15/0 (\$3.65) per box for Extra Fancy, size 163/175, while the best Winesaps from Washington were difficult to sell at 12/0 during January and frequently went as low as 10/0 (\$2.45) in February. Rome Beauties met resistance at 11/0. "Long counts" and lower grades have sold for all prices down to 6/0 (\$1.45), many going under the hammer at 8/0 to 10/0 (\$1.95 - 2.45). The causes of these variations are not far to seek.

Virginia Yorks and Oregon Newtowns have held up because of the short supplies and the generally satisfactory appearance of the stock offered. Brokers handling these lines have been in a very strong position. Many Baldwins and Ben Davis from New York and New England, on the other hand, have been heavily discounted all along because of the great amount of poor fruit offered. Much of this fruit was not only in bad condition, but of inferior quality to begin with -- too small, and poor in color and appearance. Some shippers seem to have the idea that because smaller sizes are wanted in some markets, that "the smaller the better", and have sent over stuff that would only serve to injure the trade. The situation has been further aggravated by heavy supplies of poor quality Nova Scotia stock, selling at from \$2.45 to \$4.40 per barrel. The depression in the red varieties of boxed fruit must be attributed, as previously stated, chiefly to the spray residue difficulty, although supplies have been large at times for this period of the year.

Competition from Oranges and Deciduous Fruits.

The winter started with forebodings of keen competition from a bumper crop of Spanish oranges, but the crop was severely damaged by frosts in December. During January low orange prices made real the outlook promised, although shipments were lighter than the previous year. The low prices were partially due, however, to the poor condition of the fruit. February reports indicate high prices for good fruit, with poor stock still selling low.

Recent trade reports have indicated that Spanish shipments as a result of the frost damage may fall 1,000,000 - 1,500,000 cases below the total exports of 11,897,000 cases last season.

Arrivals of South African deciduous fruits, pears, peaches and apricots as well as grapes, have been heavier than ever during this period, and have undoubtedly contributed to making the sale of apples more difficult. South African fresh fruits becoming an increasingly important competitor at this time of year.

